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A Princess in Thrall

● **Riley Hughes**

AROUND the time she became twelve, Helen began having the dream. Whether it came to her at night soon after she fell asleep, or in the morning just before she woke, she could never determine. But night after night for over a year now, the dream would come.

The worst of it was the silence. First, Danny would be in his little rocking chair, rocking, rocking, and only she would hear. And then, in the dream, the furniture would begin gliding.

She could never bring herself to talk about the dream, even to Danny. After, in the dream, Danny's chair stopped soundlessly rocking, there would be a pause. Then she and Danny would go hand in hand to the door of another room. The rug, elevated about two inches from the floor, would glide out, with the furniture on it. And another set of furniture would glide silently in. There would be other people, strange, silent people, in the room. This would happen to the other rooms, until there would be strange families in all the rooms but one.

In the dream Helen hated the silence, but during the daytime she dreaded noise. Her parents' angry voices, her father's slamming of the front door — it happened this morning, as on most mornings — these noises she did not mind. But the ringing of the doorbell, the summons of the telephone — these were signs of the silent people. This morning the telephone rang, and Helen, when she answered it, recognized the soft, sliding voice of Mrs. McGettrick.

As she laid the receiver on the mahogany veneer table, Helen heard the thin voice talking into the table polish. "You there, Alice? It's about Jerry and that woman again."

Her mother came into the room then, wiping her hands on a square of paper towel. She let it drop to the floor. Then, motioning Helen out of the room, she picked up the receiver.

Helen waited expectantly in the kitchen, and sure enough her mother began shouting and throwing things. Crash! That must be Daddy's picture, Helen thought. It was near the telephone. Next the sound of books. School books too, probably. This would be an excuse . . . but she decided not to go in. Then her mother slammed the receiver down.

Helen got out of the kitchen in time. Methodically her mother was taking dishes from the shelves and breaking them one by one.

Will she stop at seven? Eight. Nine. It was fourteen the last time.

Then there was silence. Silence as shocking as the noiseless rocking in Helen's dream.

It was then that Helen had started washing the outside windows.

Helen climbed her ladder and looked into the kitchen. Her mother was on one knee, dustpan and brush in her hands. She was picking up the stalagmites and stalactites of china splintered and shimmering on

the linoleum floor. To Helen, behind the window glass, her mother looked like some fairy princess who has a puzzle to work out. Fit the pieces together, and the enchantment works. The cottage turns into a castle, or the bird on the lawn becomes a prince from a far country.

Helen's mother tapped on the window with the nail of an index finger. Helen looked in. Her mother was smiling and saying something. They both tried to lift the window at the same time.

"I'll make sandwiches," her mother said when the window was up, "and then we can go."

To the river? Usually they didn't take sandwiches. It was only four blocks and not worth the trouble. "We'll eat here," her mother would say when they would be going to the river. "We're not millionaires." Still, sometimes she would put up a lunch, and they'd buy soda pop at Gormley's store only a block before you get to the river.

"You'll have to come and get dressed for it."

"The river? For the river?"

"We'll have to take the trolley. Your father has the car, of course."

They couldn't be going to the river, then. There was no trolley car to it. It wasn't but four blocks. From the roof of the garage you could almost see it. Well, honestly, it was too low to see, but you could make out the roofs of some of the houses on the far bank. They were on a hill, standing high above the railroad tracks that crossed the river and looped their way north.

"Do I tell Danny to come in yet?"

Helen's mother shook her head. "Wear your blue dress. And see if your bathing suit still fits you."

"*Bathing* suit! Oh, *Mother!*"

But her mother brushed aside Helen's pleasure with a brusque hand. That was one of her unspoken rules. *I* haven't any reason to be happy, her thin, sullen mouth would signify, so why should you be happy? Helen had learned to crush signs of joy, but sometimes happiness was so unexpected, so exquisite.

For the next hour the grim business of "getting ready" went forward. When, out of a dining-room window, Helen saw Danny coming into the house, she waved him away. He mustn't spoil things. Not now.

Helen caught sight of Robert, Danny's turtle, moving about in his shallow pan. His water was pink with the disintegrated raw hamburger floating around in it. I'll wash Robert's pan out and put fresh water in it, she thought. Mother is upstairs. Here's my chance. Carefully, so as not to let the stones slide against the metal and give out an alarm, she carried the pan into the kitchen. Quickly she took Robert up to the sink, fencing him in with soap-powder boxes. Then she poured the soiled water into the sink. She washed all Robert's stones, one by one, dried them, and placed them back in the pan. "We're going to the beach, Robert," she said softly. Robert balefully tried to crawl to freedom.

Danny knocked at the back door. Their signal. One. Then two. Then three quick ones together.

Helen spoke to him through the closed door. "Sit on the back steps, Danny. We're going someplace. I'll call you when you're to come in."

She could hear the sounds of his retreat through the hallway. From the thump he made, she guessed he was skipping. The screen door closed after him, cautiously. Poor kid, she thought. What fun does

he get out of life?

When she turned around, her mother was in the room.

"I'll get that mess up, Mother," Helen said, rushing over to the sink.

Her mother was peering over at Robert. He was still trying to escape. "He never can make it, can he, Helen?" her mother said. "No matter how often he tries. Just like your father, Helen. Just like your father." Helen's mother lowered one of the boxes and watched Robert try painfully for leverage. His wet, sticky legs kept waving, uncoordinated, one at a time.

"We'll put him back now, Helen. He's had his little outing."

Helen did not dare to look at her mother. The slight, half-hysterical edge to her voice was a familiar warning.

Helen turned on the faucet, and fresh water came into Robert's pan. Her mother placed the turtle into the pan with surprising gentleness. "Good work, Helen," she said. Helen scanned her face for irony.

"It's all right to let Danny in now. And put Robert back. Set him near the window so the sun can get at him."

Helen took the pan and placed Robert on a chair in the next room. Then she went into the kitchen again and out into the hall. Please, please, she prayed, don't let her change her mind now. Make this a nice afternoon.

Danny stood up as soon as he heard her coming. Without a word he followed her into the house. They went upstairs. Helen dressed Danny, found his bathing suit for him, and left him quietly drawing in a coloring book.

A few minutes later, just as Helen finished dressing, their mother called up to them. When Helen and Danny came down together, they found their mother waiting.

They watched her gravely as she twisted her head to look up at them. She is wearing a turban again, Helen thought. How I wish she wouldn't. Her mother's mouth was a vivid red oblong, and when she smiled, Helen saw lipstick smeared on her teeth. She had on a white blouse and a peasant skirt.

"The lunch," she said, indicating the hamper beside her on the sofa. It is as though she were the child, thought Helen, hoping for our approval. Helen felt a quick desire to say, "No. No, we can't go."

"I'll check the back door," she said.

"Let me," Danny said, and darted out of the room. Their mother was already on the front porch when Danny got back. "I've got a surprise for you," Danny's secret signal to Helen said.

They had luck with the bus and streetcar. Their mother let them sit where they wished. Even when Danny knelt on the seat and practically hung his head out the window, she said nothing. I can't figure her out, Helen thought. She's smiling. Smiling to herself. She even seems happy.

They came at last, through swamps and grassy places, to the little wayside station for Twin Beach. They had several yards to go through bald patches of sand and clumps of tall grass before they came to the steps that leveled off to the beach itself. The beach was divided in half by a sand spit with a promontory at the end of it. At high tide there was just one beach.

Helen and Danny turned their eyes resolutely away when they passed the casino. It was their part of the bargain, they both felt, not

to "want" anything.

But her mother put her hand on Helen's arm. "Get Danny a pail and shovel," she said.

Helen took the half dollar from her mother's hand. In a minute she was back with a pail and shovel for Danny.

"Thank you, Mommy," Danny said, not taking his eyes away from Helen's face. He did not reach out for the pail. "Take it," Helen said roughly, forcing his hand to grasp the pail handle.

"You two wait here a minute," their mother said, and she started down to the picnic grove. Helen watched the short, turbaned figure making its way down the decline. Danny thrust his pail toward Helen for inspection. Robert, his head and feet tucked sullenly out of sight, lay like a stone in the bottom of the pail. "She's going over to the parking lot," Helen told Danny. "Get your feet out, you dumb turtle," Danny said happily into the pail's resounding hollow.

As they watched, their mother came back into sight again. When she arrived at the picnic benches, she waved to them and sat down.

Hand in hand Helen and Danny came down the hill toward their mother. The sun was hot in the sky, and the tall grasses snapped at Helen's bare legs as she made her way doggedly down the hill.

"Will she mind if she finds out about Robert?" Danny asked, turning his pale face toward his sister. His freckles stood out like little brown coins.

"I don't know, Danny. Don't ask me. I just don't know."

But their mother was smiling at them. She didn't seem to notice Danny and his pail. Instead, she drew Helen to her after taking the lunch basket and placing it on the picnic table. Helen saw that her mother had her sunglasses on now, and that one of the bows was not over her ear but resting on the turban.

"It's M-8834, all right, Helen," her mother said. "Yes, indeedy, good old M-8834."

"That's ours," Helen said softly so Danny would not hear. "Our license plate."

"Yes." Her mother made a gay smile. "How jolly," she said.

Helen's eyes questioned her mother. But her mother bent down to Danny, who quickly put his pail behind him. "We're the three wise monkeys, aren't we, Danny boy? We don't see it, we don't hear it, we don't say it."

Helen started to open the lunch basket. "Later," her mother said. "I've changed my mind." Then she took Danny by the hand and walked down the slope to the sandy beach. Helen picked up the lunch basket and followed them. "I am a princess," she told herself. "A princess in thrall."

To Helen's surprise, her mother rented a beach umbrella from a lifeguard. He carried the umbrella in a big barrow painted red and blue. Their mother gaily directed that the umbrella be set quite close to the water, at a spot which had a commanding view of the entire beach.

"Now you'd better go and get your suit on. We'll hold the fort, won't we, Danny?" Danny waved his shovel at Helen. Then he got busy digging a nice big hole for Robert.

Helen turned once and looked at them, and her glance took in the entire beach, twin beaches still, with its two dozen or so people, some of them racing back and forth or play-

ing with beach balls. Most were wearing sweaters over their suits. Only a very few were in the water.

Quickly, efficiently, Helen slipped on her bathing suit in the bathhouse. She kept her dress on, as the nuns had taught her to do, and she had her bathing suit on and in place, all but for the buttoning of the straps, before she took her dress off and hung it beside her underclothes. She locked the door to the bathhouse, and then unstrapping her left shoulder strap, but not letting it fall down, she slipped the key chain around it.

While she was walking gingerly through the low pool of water separating the bathhouse runway from the beach, she noticed a tall woman in a white bathing suit a few feet ahead of her. The woman had a white towel wrapped around her head like a turban. A moment later she brushed the towel back with one hand and it fell to her shoulders. Helen was admiring the woman's beautiful red hair when the thought struck her: Why, that's Mrs. Morgan. I know her, she lives in our neighborhood.

Mrs. Morgan stepped out onto the beach. A man was standing with his back to the bathhouses, surveying the beach. He was wearing blue trunks, and he had a Panama hat on his head. Mrs. Morgan went up to the man and threw her towel at him. "Boo!" she said. The man caught the towel expertly without a backward glance.

As the couple went away together hand in hand, Helen suddenly knew that she had seen her father.

"One," she began counting. "Two," and she counted each slow step down to the gay beach umbrella thrust near the water's edge. "Twelve." She could see the two figures before her, making their way slowly to her right as they went toward the narrow sand spit leading to the rocky promontory. "Sixteen." She could ask to go home. She was feeling sick all of a sudden, she could say. One foot ahead of the other. "Twenty." She kept on, pausing occasionally while people passed by, dragging their umbrellas after them and trailing deep wakes in the soft brown sand.

Her mother was standing in front of their umbrella, her eyes shaded by her hand, apparently peering at a sailboat which could be seen at the line where the sea and the sky came together.

Helen began to run. "Let's go home now, Mother," she said. "I want to go home now."

Her mother turned, and her mouth was open in a smile. But her eyes were not smiling. "You've seen them too, hey? You've seen them."

Two young men, kicking up soft sand, came between Helen and her mother on their way to the water.

"Helen," her mother said in a low voice, "I want you to look at this." Still smiling, she took Helen by the arm. "Look again. I want you to remember. Always."

"Mother, please! Please! Come away, Mother!"

"I want you always to remember it." Her mother pointed to the two figures, now quite alone as they climbed the rocky promontory. "You're never to forget it."

Helen broke away from her mother's grasp and started running toward the bathhouse. "Helen!" she heard behind her. It was Danny, rushing toward her. "Helen, it's Robert! He got away!" When she came to the place Danny pointed out to her, the turtle had already slipped out to the open sea.

The Mystery of Charity and the Novelist George Bernanos

● **Brother Daniel Bernian, F.S.C.**

Translated by Richard P. Boudreau

BERNANOS, like Péguy and Bloy, writes under a dictation — a dictation of his dreams and of his faith regenerated by charity. His characters, who take shape within himself, are the very ones that swarmed in the consciousness of a child given to dreaming, of a boy of seventeen years, a soldier, a sick person, a Frenchman. Like Péguy, he speaks of "our" people, "our" ancestors, and "our" lineage. When he retraces his adolescent rambles along highways and byways, when he describes churches, houses or nature, he is thinking of his region, Artois. As soon as Bernanos takes up his pen, immediately there rises up within him his childhood which, as he says himself, was like any other, but which he draws on for all that he writes as from an inexhaustible source of dreams. We see in his novels the faces and the places of his childhood, all stirred up, mingled and blended together by a kind of unconscious memory that made of him a poet and a novelist. Loved ones pass by on the screen and he recognizes them only long afterward, or it even happens that he fails to recognize them at all, because little by little they have been transformed and combined with others. They have become imaginary creatures, but creatures more real for him than living persons. All these obsessions of Bernanos become as characteristic of his novels as the great supernatural adventure which he describes. These characters who take shape within him and these lands which form the background recall a thoroughly provincial setting like that occupied by the bourgeois of Mauriac; but the characters in the novels of Mauriac represent for their author a "ferocious humanity," whereas in the novels of Bernanos the province furnishes the "nobility" of his novelistic universe.

The genius of Bernanos, however, does not lie solely in the power to create from dreams; it is powerful only because of the warm feeling of charity that sets it in motion. Bernanos' manner of identifying himself with his characters is altogether different from that of a non-Christian novelist. He identifies himself especially with his portraits of priests, whether they are in a state of saintly simplicity and complete human destitution, like Conissan Chevancy and the curé d'Ambricourt, or possess the tranquillity of faith, like the curé de Torcy. The same participation is established between the novelist and those among his characters who are in the throes of despair, like Cénabre and the "false-priest" Ouine. In the eloquent preface to the *Grands cimetières sous la lune* we read that they are all close to the heart of the writer who drew them from deep within

himself. Since Bernanos is a novelist of a Christian make-up, the gift of "seeing" souls, the gift of loving these souls is visible even toward those among his characters who are utterly forsaken, who are in the night-of-the-soul or in revolt — the two Mouchettes, even the second one who kills herself; Philip, who also kills himself; Evangeline and Simone Alfieri, who commit murder — or even the indifferent ones — Pernichon, the doctors, and the psychiatrists.

The mystery of charity from the point of view of the novelist himself is clarified by the vocation of the novelist, which Bernanos relates to the vocation of the priest. In writing his novels, Bernanos has recourse to that penetration of souls and of things by which man can incorporate a small part of himself, that penetration which resembles the charity of his saintly priests who can read souls. How does the priest have this gift of lucidity to read souls? For Bernanos the clairvoyance of priests derives exclusively from the gift they have of loving souls. By studying the technique of Bernanos we can discover a close resemblance between these priestly graces, such as Bernanos has seen them, and the graces of the novelist. From deep within his consciousness where he lives with his creatures, Bernanos tries incessantly to raise them up to the light of the soul. Of course, there is in Bernanos a priestly tendency which inclines him toward a meeting with souls. The reason he liked to write in a café atmosphere can be ascribed to his search, by means of a look cast on the unknown passerby, for the "just measure of joy or of grief." For Bernanos this unknown person is a brother, and this look is a mysterious act of charity and the beginning of a labor for general salvation. Out of these meetings are born his characters who are like messages of love spread throughout the entire world. In short, for Bernanos writing is a vocation that is an adventure in charity.

Bernanos invites modern society to seek with Christ the Kingdom of God rather than a terrestrial Paradise. Our novelist does not reason like the Jews who were scandalized by Christ because, according to them, He deceived the hopes of men. Bernanos demonstrates that in the face of this so-called deception, by their search for a terrestrial Paradise, men set up against God a new Tower of Babel. In their search for security on earth the indifferent ones find only a conclusion that they cannot explain. Less obsessed by indifferent beings than Bloy, but evidently inspired by his continual war against them, Bernanos represents them in his novels as characters lost in an earthly circle, with no apparent concern about the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Satan. In fact, they neither love nor hate.

With the indifferent ones, like the father of Mouchette and the father of Chantal, or with the "doctors," the problem, ostensibly an exterior one, is in reality interior, for evil has entered into them and they have assimilated it. It has become so well integrated in them that they have ceased to see it. Honor, as Bernanos defines it, is disqualified in a society made up of men he calls "realists." Honor, that respect for the image of Christ in man, penetrates the rule of charity. The law of honor, intimately bound to the law of liberty, complements the rule of charity also, since "the free man alone can love." But with these cautious ones, charity, honor, liberty take

on superficial aspects. In them moral liberty weakens in proportion as their material success and knowledge increase, and finally a vacuum exists where an individual ought to be. They live only on the surface of themselves; they are slaves of their own egotistical interests. Little by little they are consumed by the lie and they gain only destruction or absurdity, which appear in their own lives and often in the lives of others. The "doctors," for example, and those who resemble them, debase man precisely because they take as their point of departure nothing higher than themselves. Their humanism disqualifies that honor and that charity without which there will be not only no Christian society but no human society worthy of the name.

These cautious types surround the heroes of Bernanos. The absence of God does not impel them to the depth at which are found those who undertake the supernatural adventure. There is a group of characters in the state of destitution and revolt, like Mouchette, Cénabre, the countess d'Ambricourt and certain characters found in *Monsieur Ouine* and *Un mauvais rêve*. These evil types are found in the kingdom of the "Prince of this world" where hatred, the negative side of charity, becomes the most characteristic feature. Diabolical dramas take place, to use the expression of the curé d'Ambricourt, as the reverse of an act of love although symmetrical, as a reflection in the water where everything is reversed. It is "hell in this world." Monsieur Ouine is a sort of monster, but the abbé Cénabre, the second priest created by Bernanos, had already given evidence of the fatal symptom that makes the figure of the anti-priest Ouine so repugnant. Bourget has analysed the rationalistic priest in *Le Démon de midi*, but Bernanos, by his Proustian analysis and the supernatural atmosphere, presents a much more profound image of it with Cénabre and Ouine. Supernatural charity is killed by the intellectualism and the critical frame of mind found in the abbé Cénabre. This priest, in the lineage of critics like Renan, Louisy and Tyrell, reverses the order of values and subordinates charity to curiosity. His faith is slowly disintegrated by delightful indulgence in deliberate doubt and the corrosive effect of a curiosity without love. He falls into a state of anguish, an agony which resembles that of Donissan but which is without love. Monsieur Ouine strips himself to the point of no longer loving himself and he lives in a sort of despair. He brightens the shadows around him like a priest of Satan. One notices that he has a gift of penetration, but the tragedy of Ouine is that he sees within souls with no feeling of love. He maintains only curiosity. Bernanos is the novelist of Satan, but only in the sense that he shows that immense hateful desire which Satan maintains for souls. It is a desire which resembles the hideous taste for the spiritual in Monsieur Ouine. It is diabolical charity.

Nevertheless, the wicked are not completely outside of God and his love. Like Péguy, Bernanos is well aware that Christ saved mankind by means of the Cross. The two writers wonder at the prodigious revolution that was accomplished on the Cross and is still going on. In *Le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d'Arc* Péguy expresses through the words of Jeannette a desire to save from Hell all souls. Bernanos shows us saints like Donissan, Chantal, Chevance, the curé d'Ambricourt, all of them devoured with love for souls and assuming as a mission the task of delivering souls

from "hell in this world" at the cost of the complete sacrifice of their lives. Perhaps the logically minded person will grow indignant, but in comparison with human logic, the absurd can contain a meaning on a deeper, more powerfully efficacious plane — the plane of supernatural charity.

The novels of Bernanos easily take us back to the diabolic in the work of Barbey d'Aurevilly and to the aspiration toward salvation from below in the novels of Bloy, but they also remind us of the work of Péguy. More orthodox than Péguy, Bernanos depicts "hell" abolished by the mystery of charity, that is, by the loving sacrifice of a saint or a hero who is devoured by the desire for souls. Like sister Gervaise in *Le Mystère de la charité*, the curé de Fenouille in *Monsieur Ouine* pursues this end, which evokes the sublime vision of the Communion of Saints. Jeannette, like Donissan, would like to be damned by God if, by this deliberate damnation, she could deliver all other from their damnation. Her suffering then would not be useless, like that of the damned, for theirs is lost suffering. For Bernanos, as for Péguy, the mystery of the charity of the Cross is the power, the only power, that triumphs over hatred and hell.

The novelistic universe of Bernanos finds its greatness in the lives of his saints. The novelist treats of human nature in its entirety, rooted in the mystery of Love to its innermost depths. Before Gabriel Marcel, Bernanos dealt with hatred and love, not as problems but as mysteries. Our novelist treats directly and in a positive manner the most elevated subjects of the spiritual life. Thus his brightest pages burn with the flame of the supernatural charity of his humble saints.

The characters of Mauriac carry within themselves only negative messages of love touching upon its morality and psychology. In the characters of Bloy the question of saintliness and noble love, found on several pages of his novels, shows forth from time to time a glimmer or a ray of light, whereas Chantal de Clergerie, the abbé Chevance, the curé d'Ambricourt and even the abbé Donissan are saints already well advanced on the path of saintliness. If sometimes the work of the saints of Bernanos does not seem to be pursued to its complete development, their supernatural charity is ready. They lead a banal life, but their destinies cross the mysterious boundary of the supernatural with much more fanfare than do those of the characters of Mauriac or Bloy. The saints of Bernanos, like those of Dostoevski, are not isolated in a world more properly belonging to human psychology; they bathe in the supernatural. As a novelist, Bernanos is not primarily a novelist of Satan, nor even of sin, like Mauriac. A characteristic that has not been sufficiently noted in the novels of Bernanos is a reigning "desire," God's desire for souls. Bernanos calls God "voracious" because he has a total desire for souls, that is, a total charity, stronger than that of Satan. The saint, especially the priest, is one who has this same taste, this same passion for souls, and that is why the novelist always places him in the midst of a parish, which is the image ever renewed of the Communion of Saints, a communion of suffering members open to hope by that exchange of merits, which is the fruit of the charity of Christ and of the saints who continue His suffering and His total charity. No formula will completely explain the mystery of saintliness in the work of Bernanos, except to say that it is simply to live one's life and to die one's death in a

total charity. The activities of his humble characters appear rather as supernatural charity carried out in space and in time.

Under this aspect of agony, the lives of the saints of Bernanos are not at all attractive for those who like to see in saints only an aspect that is pleasant and calm. Their lives, relentless struggles which are like a passion in the primary meaning of the word, are the expression of a total charity.

The abbé Donissan, the saint who throws the reader into the greatest state of perplexity, is just as imbued with love of God and of his fellow man as the others. Nevertheless, in him Bernanos shows us the opposite force, that is, charity toward one's fellow man which finds its expression in a total war against the enemy of God and of man — Satan. If God is chased from the world, it is the other who takes His place; that hell waits for the saint. Renewing the agony of the Son of Man, the saint redeems the sinner. Donissan descends so deeply into this hell of hatred and lying that in the temptation of despair the reader is present at the downfall of one possessed by the demon, Mouchette, and of the servant of God, the abbé Donissan. The priest finds himself in a world of high tension where the risks are enormous. His struggle unfolds in this spiritual universe more charged with drama than any other. The pity, the charity of Donissan is not serene; it is a devouring flame which calls forth compassion in the primary meaning of the word. The wretched hero, completely absorbed by his attacks on the enemy, does not have enough concern for God, and Satan relentlessly leads him astray to the point that the priest begins to suspect even the gifts that come from God. Having too much concern for his enemy and never standing in expectation of the joy which comes from God, Donissan almost completely loses his hope in face of the immense desire for souls which the Satan of Bernanos evinces. This terrible struggle takes place in spite of, or rather because of, the charity of the saint.

Bernanos appears less disquieting when he paints saintliness in two other heroes: Chantal de Clergerie and the curé d'Ambricourt. The young girl knows that the secret for establishing joy on earth consists in doing very ordinary things with a supernatural charity. The stages of her saintliness proceed from the natural joy of childhood, passing through the night-of-the-soul to end in an intimate union with the suffering Christ. Supernatural joy results from the feeling of this union. Here too, the expression of this total charity is not serene. The saintliness of Chantal works like a burn on the souls which inhabit her father's house. As a consequence, one man commits suicide while another sinks into madness and Chantal herself is killed. Does not this climate of violence evoke the tragedy of Christ, for around the Cross we find the "good people" who kill out of hatred, the suicide of Judas, the words of blasphemy of the thief?

On the social plane a young priest appears as the apostle of charity. This mystical brother of Chantal is the curé d'Ambricourt, an object of scorn for a whole society which does not understand him or, understanding him, hates him. His life is a continual state of union which he vaguely recognizes as "a voice that speaks, that does not remain silent day or night." With the charity of Christ on the Cross, the young priest looks after his parish as if he were crucified for it. It is a charity which induces him to

"suffer through souls" with the same eagerness to suffer that Christ showed in order to save humanity. It is a charity which tears his priestly heart. His life, consequently, is the expression of an infinite compassion for those poor sinners who are tortured by Satan and who resemble wretched insects mutilated by children in their cruel games and painfully making their way back along a dark wall. In short, the agony of the saints stems from their compassion; they assume as their own the sins of others.

Thus, Bernanos looks with horror upon a certain religious cerebralism which displays only intellectual enthusiasm for faith. Lives of Cartesian saints are repugnant to him. For him facts have no great value in themselves. Supernatural charity substitutes for human prudence another prudence that is higher and one that is often madness in the eyes of the world. Christ Himself gave the example in the Passion, and therein lies something which may seem irrational but which for Bernanos is suprarational. Saintliness demands more than a natural wisdom, more than a conformism to Christian rules. The indifferent types sometimes go to mass, receive the sacraments of the Church, profess the Credo; yet they are not aware of professing that Christ died for the world. They escape any practical consequences resulting therefrom. They fail to experience in their religion any "taste" for what is most fundamentally Christian. They scarcely feel that ardent desire for the supernatural risk of love.

With Claudel, Bernanos notices that the forms of egocentric love are so many obstacles to supernatural charity and saintliness. But what Bernanos does not like is the theatrical and sublime aspect which Claudel attaches to saintliness. For Bernanos, saintliness is not matter for an ostentatious show of sublimity. The charity of the saints of Bernanos sets itself apart absolutely from all types of literary feelings. Contemporary literature also has been pleased to express a kind of saintliness in God, manifesting itself by a constant love for the truly human good. It is certainly a natural virtue. It is the humanitarian feeling that is seen in the novels of Camus, but it is not at all the charity that is found in the novels of Bernanos. It is correct to say that the saint gives what he does not have; that is the miracle, the mystery of charity. Donissan gives hope that he does not have; the curé d'Ambricourt gives joy that he does not know.

Yet, our novelist is well aware of human love, human warmth, a feeling of tenderness for one's fellow man. But the charity of the saints entirely surpasses the active forces of feeling. True charity in the novels of Bernanos can have no other cause than that grace which comes from the Cross. In associating the two loves one with the other, love for God and love for man, Bernanos shows us in his novels that charity is essentially that supernatural virtue which, by turning man toward God, includes in itself all forms of human love, transcends them and accomplishes them. When Bernanos says that we are made in the image of God, does he mean anything else than that love is the reason for our existence?

Man cannot complete this resemblance with God unless he empties himself of himself and gives himself to God and to others in the purity of a supernatural charity. Paradox of the Christian life! The more man seems alone with Christ, the more he is in union with his fellow man. The saints cannot find the spirit of childhood except at the end of a painful

solitude and they do not arrive at joy except by having stifled all the illusory joys of this world. They practice harsh asceticism, know the cruelty of sin, and learn better than the others that they must put forth an endless and severe effort in order to love in God both others and themselves as suffering members of the Mystical Body.

More and more one will perceive that the novels of Bernanos form a part of the steady revelation of the face of man to man. Bernanos paints the human face of his time. This face is strangely analogous to the face of our Lord in His passion. The reader is confronted with a love that knows no limits. This love remains hidden behind a strained, tortured face, the face of Christ on the Cross. But the novelist does not speak merely in order to unsettle us by this continual horror; he speaks in order to show us by his saints that it is a just reason for hope. That is the message of Bernanos: the risk of love. The person who gives himself has every chance that the "voracious" desire, bigger than God, bigger than an absolute Love, will take possession of him rather than that Satanic desire which is only derision.

Anesthesia

● **Raymond Roseliep**

1

Grendel, limb snatched, plods wolf-slope wall
to slouch in bleared fluorescent fens.
Half-second quiver hoarfrost down
crepuscular chrome vines.

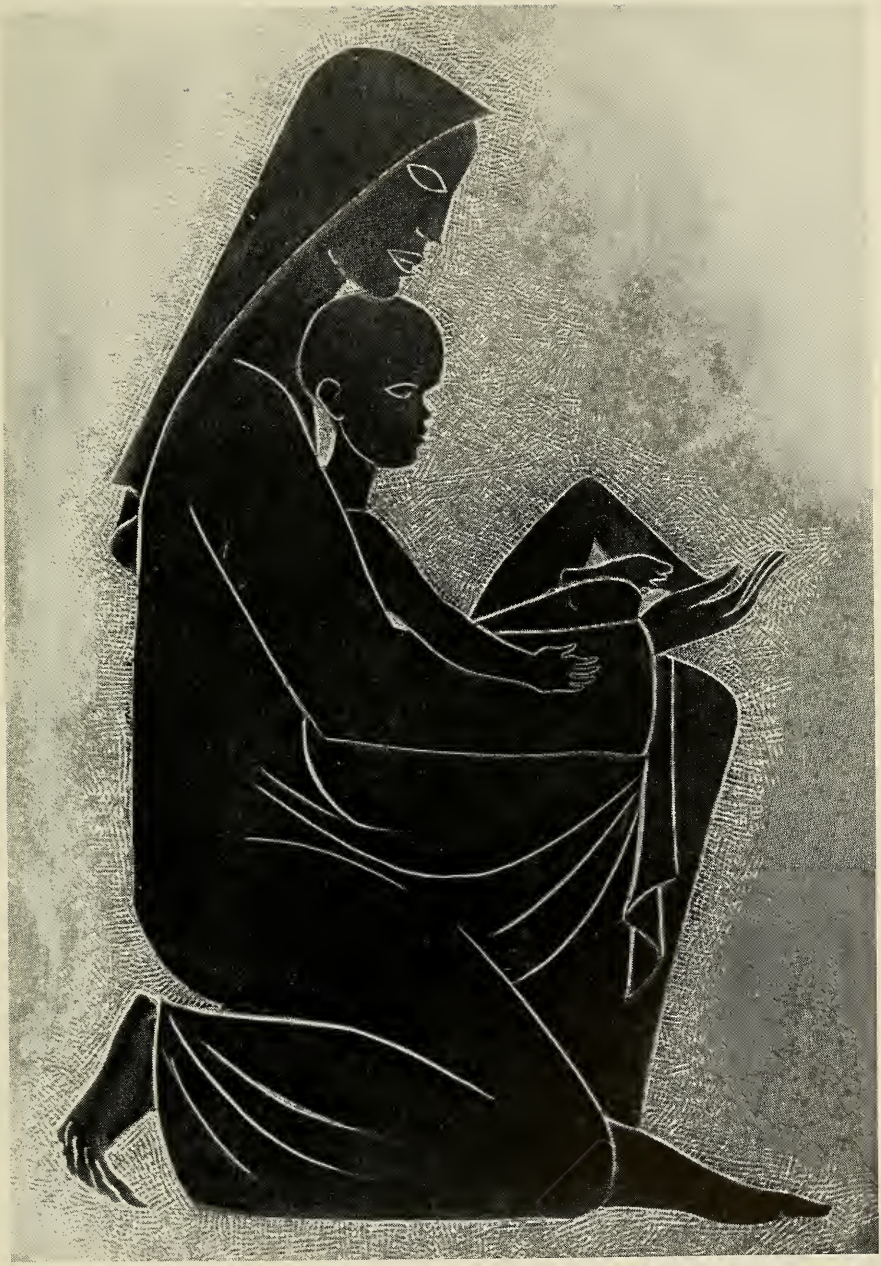
Oblivion
pools darkly kind.
Kinder the Geatman's
dayspring hand.

2

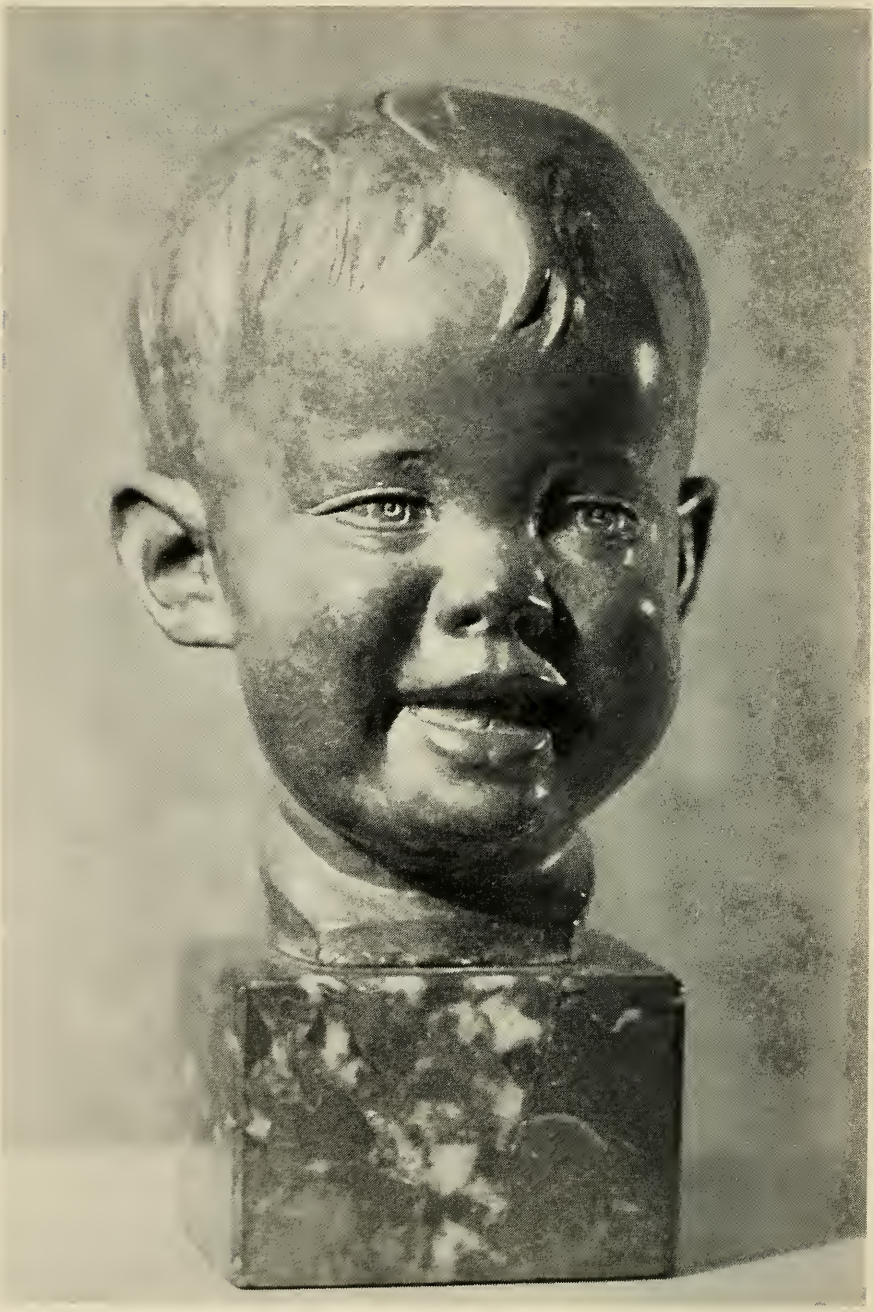
Sun-candle sutures spear-poled head
smirking awareness richly in.
Wood-ways drool antiseptic thick
at steel-silvery pain.

Swan-roads twinge,
creak to dull itch.
But God still rides
the Geatman's touch.

Although FRANK ELISCU is a native New Yorker, his works are located in many parts of the country. Among his commissions are "Shark Diver" at Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina; Cornell Medical College War Memorial at Olin Hall, New York City; "Atoms for Peace" at Ventura, California; and "Naiad Fountain" and the "Heroic Slate Horses," both in New York City.



MADONNA AND CHILD by Frank Eliscu. Black Slate. Artist's Collection.



BABY JOE by Beatrice Fenton. Bronze. Privately Owned.

The Identity of Mary Devoe

● **Laura Livingston**

EVEN in the hospital ward, even though shielded by strong steel and brick walls, Mary still heard the wind screaming those words from that rhyme: "Who has been bad today? You!" "Who are you? You! Who?" asked the wind.

She had lied all right to the nurse when she complained again of the pain in her side. No, the question — there was the real horror. How fast she was caught now, face to face, a hare at bay before the hound. Whatever years she may have lived so far, dodging the question, beating it off, all of a sudden the illness swooped; and now she must go to the operation, straight to the lethal chamber. No chance to turn aside here. Entering the lethal chamber, she must leave the world, leave every friendly creature. Even her body she must leave behind her at that door. Her five senses, her conscious mind, her very thoughts must there be sheared away. Those who owned a self need not fear ether, but what was Mary's self? Why, that was nothing, because in her case Mary's self, her identity, was only a question, a hollow O, a void, a chasm deeper than unconsciousness. It was that wind's cry, "Who are you?" because Mary owned no identity.

Back at Nolan Orphan Asylum she had learned every single thing there was to tell about herself; she had early concluded that the sum of that was not sufficient to make an identity. As soon as she was old enough to listen, she had heard the story that was being passed among the bigger girls:

"My honey, Mary, wasn't she the cutest, smartest baby, lying there tipped up in Mrs. Spiker's arms! Her blanket, a great full-sized thing, fell all over the place, with a piece of dirty ruled paper pinned on the top. Did I get hell for coming into the office!"

Remembered now, the words stung with a dull, impressive edge. The girl who spoke, named Marjorie, had dragged her voice in sarcasm. Marjorie's hair, like Mary's, hung down thin and stringy at the temples.

"A-oh, you've done it now, Marjorie! Mary's not supposed to know."

Marjorie's chum, Elizabeth, scratched her nose, bending it upward. Marjorie pinned Mary against the wall. Mary's neck touched the joining of the eaves, so she had to bend her head. Marjorie's bony fingers pinched Mary's biceps.

"Never you tell what I've given away," she said. "Of this you know

←

BEATRICE FENTON has statues in many public and private collections throughout the country. In Philadelphia, her "Sun-Dial" may be seen in Rittenhouse Square, her "Fairy Fountain" in Wister Woods, and her "Ariel Sun-Dial" in the Shakespeare Garden at the University of Pennsylvania. "Wood Music" is in Danby Park, Wilmington, Delaware.

nothin'. Understand? Else, I'll squeeze you. I'll squeeze your gizzard out through your skinny jaws."

Old Teacher Flagstaff, lavender faced, entered then. Five girls sucked in their breath behind their hands, and Marjorie quickly went weak and released Mary. But Mary later saw another one of those cute babies, in another teacher's arms, and the teacher babbled ironically, pityingly, "Found on a subway bench. Left for dead, I suppose." And those words fitted perfectly. They sank so easily into Mary's mind, like lumps of lead in slots, into the grooves which had just been cut by Marjorie.

And the very next thing you knew, when you were six — could it have been seven years! — you saw the poem. Propping the book, your legs straight out on the floor in front of you, right off — the instant you read the words of the rhyme and saw, over the words, the picture of the monstrous face at the window bars, the distended nostrils and bloated cheeks of the accusing questioning wind — you recognized all of it, obviously meant for you. "Who has been bad today? Who? You!" said the poem; and "Who are you?" added the wind — then, afterward, and every time it blew.

When you left Nolan Orphan Asylum and went out to work, to care for the little boy Harry, you heard it. When you stole his rosy-faced doll so that you'd have one secret possession and afterward buried the doll and hated Harry whom you had loved and asked to leave that family, then you heard it. Even inside a little breeze sometimes you heard it.

And now the wind and water shivered across the brittle pane of the hospital window, and Mary stopped her ears and pressed her face tight against the flat edge of the down-turned upper sheet. She heard the wind so strident and sharp she feared that if she looked at the window, what might she not, perhaps, see there.

If she could only go back to yesterday now, to her situation in the Mansfield household. If she could just be at her dusting — bric-a-brac under her hands, Dresden figurines smooth to the finger and vision; sweeping — vacuum cleaner wheezing, the strong odor of dust, and the sweet odor of lint, carpet nap flattened, rising, darkened, whitening, as the brush pulled and pushed. If she could only be back among things, with things under her hands and things against her eye, with things to be done and much work to finish. All her life things and work had provided refuge from the yawning chasm of the question of her identity. Why must this operation now come to strip her of all such devices?

Olga, the cook at the Mansfield house, said only last week that you never know but a sudden disease can strike without the least warning. Wasn't that true, though! Your evening out, last night! There had been quite a nip in the air. You must have caught a chill, for suddenly — what a pain — and it was this appendicitis. Time to go home to the Mansfields, but when the bus came to the curbstone you couldn't climb in. Then came the policeman, the taxicab, and the rain, and the wind — everything all in a heap.

"Feel bad?" asked the nurse, holding a cloth which smelled of scorched cotton.

"Oh, my side. I feel fit to die," said Mary, again speaking the lie, because this pain was a trifle. She ducked and twisted her face into a

sneer that might, she hoped, seem tough. The nurse encircled her head with the cloth and tied up her hair.

"You make me bald as an old beggar woman in that thing you put on my head."

"Everybody wears one of those when she is going to have an operation," said the nurse, and she put a needle into the side of Mary's arm.

"How long from now before they begin?" asked Mary.

The nurse crackled silently. "We aren't supposed to tell those things."

Mary lifted her nose. "Well then, whenever it *is* to be, you can just ask them — suppose you *tell* them — to leave out the ether."

"Do you mind ether very much?" The nurse watched her with narrowed eyes.

Mary curled S-wise under the cover, clutching a portion of blanket in her fist. "I can't take ether," she said, and it was as if already her very bones were cold, and a chill made its way outward from the center of her body, as though in all her sections every little internal furnace and dynamo were being turned low and banked down in readiness for the terrible journey to come.

She gazed and wondered at the people in the other beds. These people were able to lie comfortably. The girl on her side, with her hand under the pillow, was sleeping — even sleeping as soundly as if she were healthy. The girl with the hollow eyes, with her hands clasped across her chest, stared with a smile at the ceiling. The gray-haired woman with the bandaged wrist was talking to herself in a tone that seemed to be happy. Mary gazed spitefully, jealously, in despair at these more fortunate than she. These lay in comfort because they did not have to fear ether, because, when they went to the lethal chamber and there must travel shorn of consciousness, of their five senses, and of all communication with the world, they would yet have their selves to carry them through the perilous passage.

What terrible medicine had the nurse put into her blood! It looked as if there were mist in the corners of the room. Her body was sleepy and weak, but her eyes could see the window more clearly than ever, and now, behind the glass there, just as she feared, rose the very face of that monster, the wind, exactly the way it was in the picture in the book. To enter the room, it would only have to break the pane.

Two nurses were bending over her.

"I can't take ether, you see," she said. "I can't take ether because I have no identity."

One of the nurses ripped the covers off, all the way down to Mary's feet.

"Cover me tight!" she cried.

They tucked and twisted a shower curtain around her.

"Watch it. Watch it. Watch it, now," they said, and all in a flash, with a lift and swing, they laid her on a padded table and rolled her away.

"Hold it. Hold it. Steady there," said a voice from above her head.

She lurched, and dizzily clutched for the side of the table, and, as by a miracle, the wheels stopped.

She threw her feet over the side and sat upright.

"I've got to get out of here quick," she cried, but too late, for the nurse grasped her shoulders, and she fell back, jolting as she dropped on the padding.

The nurse's face, wavering, flickering, revealed the imprint of a smile, and there was a soft chuckle. "You

don't want to leave the place that soon, anyway," she said, and the table, with unswerving decision, moved on.

She hooked her hands together above her head. "Won't somebody please stop the wind?" she gasped.

"The storm bothers her," said a woman's voice.

"Not in here," said the doctor. "She had those grains. She ought to be much quieter than this."

There was a woman's stifled murmur, barely audible, "She's that type."

She settled her head backward, being aware as she did so, of the chemicals in the air.

The doctor's hand closed on her arm, registering a broad firm pressure. "We're not going to hurt you, Mary."

She raised her eyelids a crack, far enough to see his face swimming in and out amid dark clouds. His eyes, the only thing about him that did not sway and tremble, were dark brown, the color of chestnuts or the flanks of a dark, bay riding horse. He must be sitting on a chair or stool very close; and nearer still, next to her ears, stood a funny machine, like the stand of a water cooler except that where the cooler and water bottle should have been there were a little flask and pieces of rubber hose. Then unexpectedly a hand, reaching from another direction, placed a soft amorphous glove over her nose and jaws.

She started and flinched violently, but the doctor's voice rose and flowed up to her, and a sudden wave of emotion like a feeling of deep loyalty rose from her as if to join his voice and make her move alongside it. Obediently, she groped forward and tested a breath of the strange vapor that issued from the glove.

The doctor's voice trailed down a wide triangular shaft, receding from her in an even meticulous progression like a diagram drawn in perspective. The second breath halted. There she felt impelled to pause again, though merely for a moment, in order to take a bird's-eye view in the two directions together — backward at what she was leaving, and forward at what lay in front. Suddenly she laughed, shouted in a frenzied ecstasy of pleasure.

"Mary!" The doctor's voice was angry, disappointed.

With a feeling of childishness and shame, she drew up sharply. Every nerve swept to attention, her breath returned, and with its coming her lungs expanded fantastically. On and out her breath rushed into the huge area of her transformed chest and ribs. Vast, gigantic she became, and then, as she pulled softly on, with the utmost gentleness, more quietly than the sound of a leaf falling to the ground, she breathed her lungs away.

She heard the doctor once more. From a distant peak of sound, "O.K.," he signaled.

Was this the way the thing should go?

It was not as if the world had left her, but as if she had left the world. It was not as if she cowered in destitution, like a person deserted by mortal life, thrown unwanted into the cold chasm of nether space, but it was as if she had undertaken this journey deliberately, quite by her own choice, and the journey seemed to be an experimental visit, a sort of reconnoitre. The absence of the things that she had expected to miss — her five senses, and the furniture and solid objects of the earth — was, instead of a hardship, a relief. She was, to be sure, anything but warm,

and she could feel nothing of the support of solid ground. Though not warm, neither was she cold, and as for the feeling of ground beneath her, this in itself was a feeling and a distraction, and its absence freed her completely from the very least and smallest fragment of responsibility to those demands and obligations which, for so many years, the earth had, from so many sources, too abundantly showered down over her.

She swam upward until her feet touched stairs and she was climbing a tower. She did not know how long she climbed; time, too, like touch and sight and smell, was no longer present. This visit of hers above living men, above the stolid earth, and above the earth's husk-like furniture might have the duration of a moment, the fourth part of a split second; it might have the duration of the millionth part of a second; or it might be lasting throughout two-hundred million years.

She reached the peak of the tower and stood upon the tip and saw space shooting out endlessly below her feet. She saw that there had been no tower after all. Volume and space had, in company with time, been thrown to the four winds. Now she could have gathered together masses of stars, countless numbers of suns and scattered them in her clothing as casually as though they were dust. So far as size concerned her here, a star that was two-hundred thousand miles in diameter would, if placed in the toe of her shoe, look like a grain of powder.

Yet she had no shoes, or clothing, or body. She had no sight — no eyes with which to see the stars, or hands with which to touch them. She did not even have the knowledge that stars were around her. The knowledge that she now had was much simpler than what hand, eye, or mind provides.

Her noisy body, out of which she had so skillfully projected herself, lay, incalculably far below, gathering to its surface, and to its inner, inter-transit nervous and arterial systems, the worry and labor of two doctors and four or five nurses. All in white — they and it — it subjected all their faculties of hand and nerve, mind and muscle, to itself. Now its welfare was entirely their concern, and its misery pleasantly theirs instead of Mary's. Mary was free as no man on earth can ever hope to be.

She knew, of course, that this interlude was only temporary. When the complicated devices, installations, small motors, and other machinery of her body had been repaired and restored to smooth running order, then it would be time that she should obediently — and quite willingly too — return to take her proper place again. And she knew that by earthly time it would not be long before the moment for return would come.

She must certainly hurry if she expected to attend to all that needed to be done first. Boldly and soberly, therefore, she shook away the last fractional particles of consciousness and memory, gathered her spaceless parts into better working line, and felt her way farther inward still.

Through magnified silence, through infinity, in and on she traveled, farther than the width of the orbits of the planets, less far than the diameter of an electron. So far in she went that once before she reached her destination it almost seemed as if she might have passed the center she sought and, without knowing it, have already begun to move outward to the other side. The thing was there even so, however,

when she finally arrived at last. Like a hard firm chip of a marble, like a tiny prick of light, like a momentary dart of thought, like the angle at the juncture of the arms of a crystal, there it lay suspended, at the depths of unconsciousness and at the summit of unconsciousness, within her, and far outside her — this, the primary essence, which through nineteen years of life she had in vain been seeking. Carefully and happily she grasped it, gathered it up, enclosed it in the folds of the surrounding silence and, clinging to the bundle thus formed, waited peacefully for the signal from below.

The thing at the center of the journey was Mary Devoe. To suppose that the special spot was going to be emptly had been a mistake. She began to laugh, first softly and circumspectly, then more loudly.

A crank groaned and jolted upward at her left rear side; a pressure materialized against her shoulders and head; and a channel of dull pain crawled toward her from a vague visceral region.

"What's she clenching in her hand so tightly?" said the nurse. "Oh, her hand is empty. Then why does she close those fingers so tight? She's all right though, I guess, just so long as she doesn't swallow her tongue. Say, Prissy was teasing Dr. Busch again. It's a terrible storm, you know, and he came up drenched. Said he literally waded across the walk. Prissy asked if he wouldn't like to dry his shoes in the sterilizing oven! What a day to develop appendicitis! Why in the world couldn't it wait until the storm was over? Well, appendices are just like babies; neither of them wait."

"Better shut down now. She's probably coming out."

How beautifully the rain drove down the window panes, dashed by the wind into waving silver bars. And what a sound it made — like a violin, she guessed, with a string being twanged between the fingers. This, of course, was the regular autumn storm that always came in October, and after a while it would end and the sun would shine again. The fall air would be crisp and hot in the park again as it always was on certain days at this season. After she was better she would walk in the park again, and it would be like the first time she had ever walked there. She would blow some dollars and ride in a carriage there. She would dust and sweep, wash napkins and iron, move beds, lift sheets and turn mattresses, make salad dressings, and wait on table at the Mansfields' again. These things, too, she would seem to be doing for the first time. And in the coming winter, when there was snow instead of rain, she would go in the park and look at the white blanket on the ground, and she would pick up a handful of snow and look at the separate flakes individually. This indeed she would really do for the first time. She would go into a restaurant and buy for herself a meal of whatever she wanted — try a glass of beer, and why not? She would go into a store and buy presents, one for Olga, two for the little Mansfield children — little things that they would like — for the girl, who liked to draw, colored pencils. In a certain store there was a red placard advertisement announcing that the company would take orders for pencils printed with gold monograms. She would put the presents on the kitchen shelf in readiness, and the next time the little girl came running in to kiss Olga, then Mary also would have a word to say.

"Here," she would call, catching the presents up from the shelf. "Here, Alice. Here, Jim."

How astonished they would be! They were not going to expect that she was a person who could give anything.

And then she was going to take a recipe book, measure the right ingredients, and carefully mix according to directions. The next time the children came, they would find her rolling at the pastry board, and they would say, "What, cookies, Mary? I didn't know you made them."

And she was going to answer, "Yes, for the first time. And for you."

The cookies would have a golden sugary crust, and they would be sweet with butter and eggs. Olga's best would not surpass them. And the third time the children came to the kitchen, Alice with her shiny curls rolling and dancing on her shoulders, and Jim with his big butting head, they would give her two kisses to every one for Olga.

In the winter, when the children went out in the snow, they came back with little teeny white stars hooked into the hairs of their woolen suits, and Olga, stopping them at the doorstep, whisked the snow into clouds as she brushed them.

Mary opened her eyes and saw the doctor standing at the foot of the bed.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

Larger, more multifarious pain was making itself heard from some middle signal room, but she could for a little while longer still delay the attention that must soon be given it.

"I feel fine," she said.

And it seemed as if she were lying in the first bed she had ever slept in.

The doctor came nearer. "That's good," he said.

"How long will it be?" she asked, not taking her eyes from his face.

"Aren't you hurrying things a little? Mrs. Mansfield expects you to take a rest of at least three weeks."

"That's a long time," said Mary.

He came nearer still, leaning close with twinkling eyes. "Is it too much hardship?"

"No. It doesn't matter."

No, it did not matter in the slightest degree. The children, the presents, the park — all could wait. For now, whatever Mary did, wherever she went, however she was, in bed, or standing on her feet, in her stockings, or in her imitation-kid, high-heeled pumps, inside or outdoors, in sun or in rain, or with the snow falling around her, covering her hat with crystals; whether indoors at the dining table dressed in her cotton uniform, or outdoors on the street dressed in her rayon suit with the scarlet blouse for her day out; loitering, shuffling, or stepping over puddles, lurching on the bus or pressed amid a thousand other people in the subway trains; in company or out of company, ironing, washing, or listening to music, dancing, playing, or working, whether happy, sad, or silly, in sickness, or in health, and in life and in death, forever and ever, beyond the borders of space and of time, as she always had been and was now, so she was always going to remain. Mary Devoe in person: timeless, indestructible, important after all.

The Sky Fisher

● **Samuel Hazo**

The kite climbs bucking up the sky,
its tail whiplashing through the shoals
of air beyond all risk of boughs
or snagging lines

to drift ascendant as his wish,
its twine in windwaves down the sea-deep
height descending to the boy
who tugs it taut

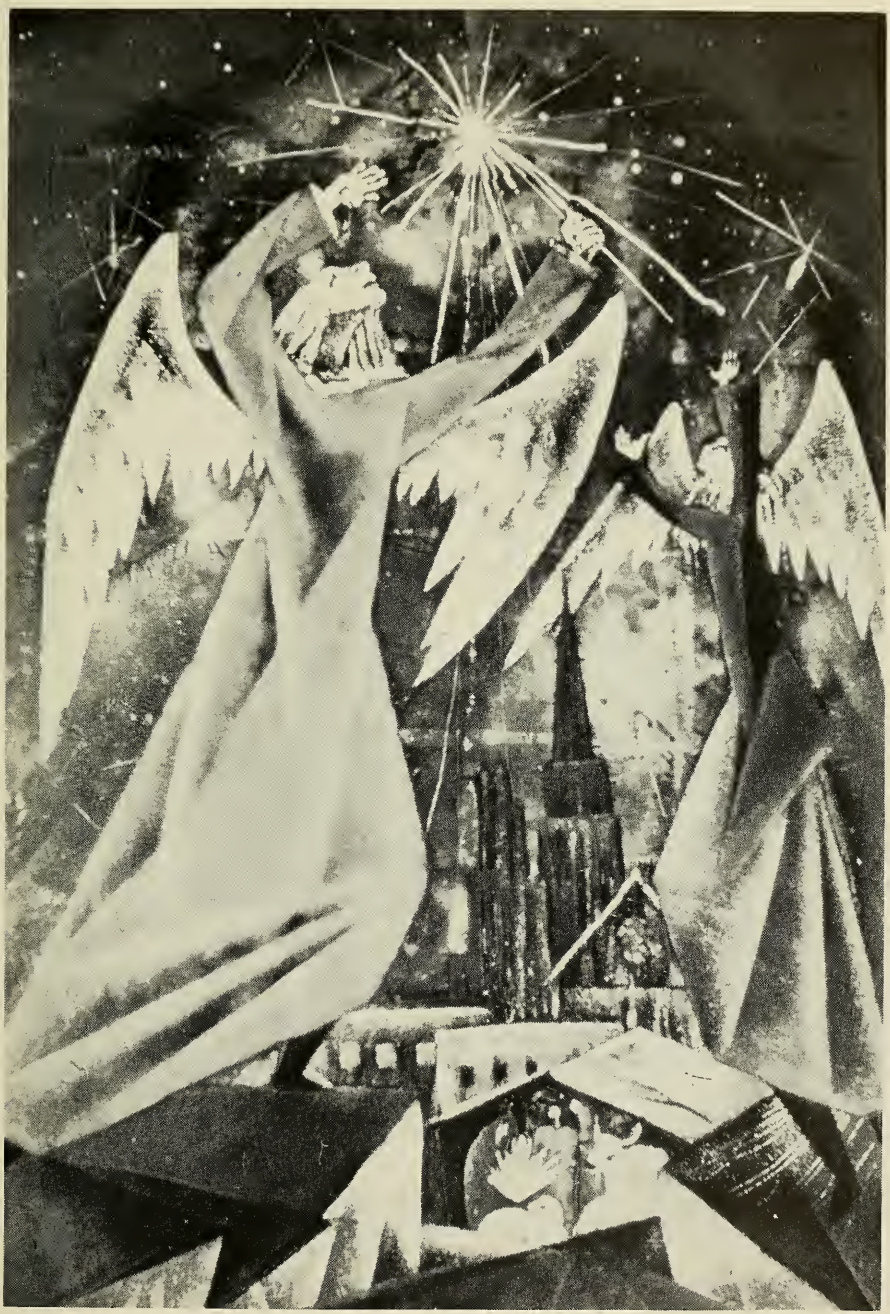
or stands immobile with the reel
unwinding to increase his cast
from earth — an angler trolling space
with rollicking lure.

Sequel

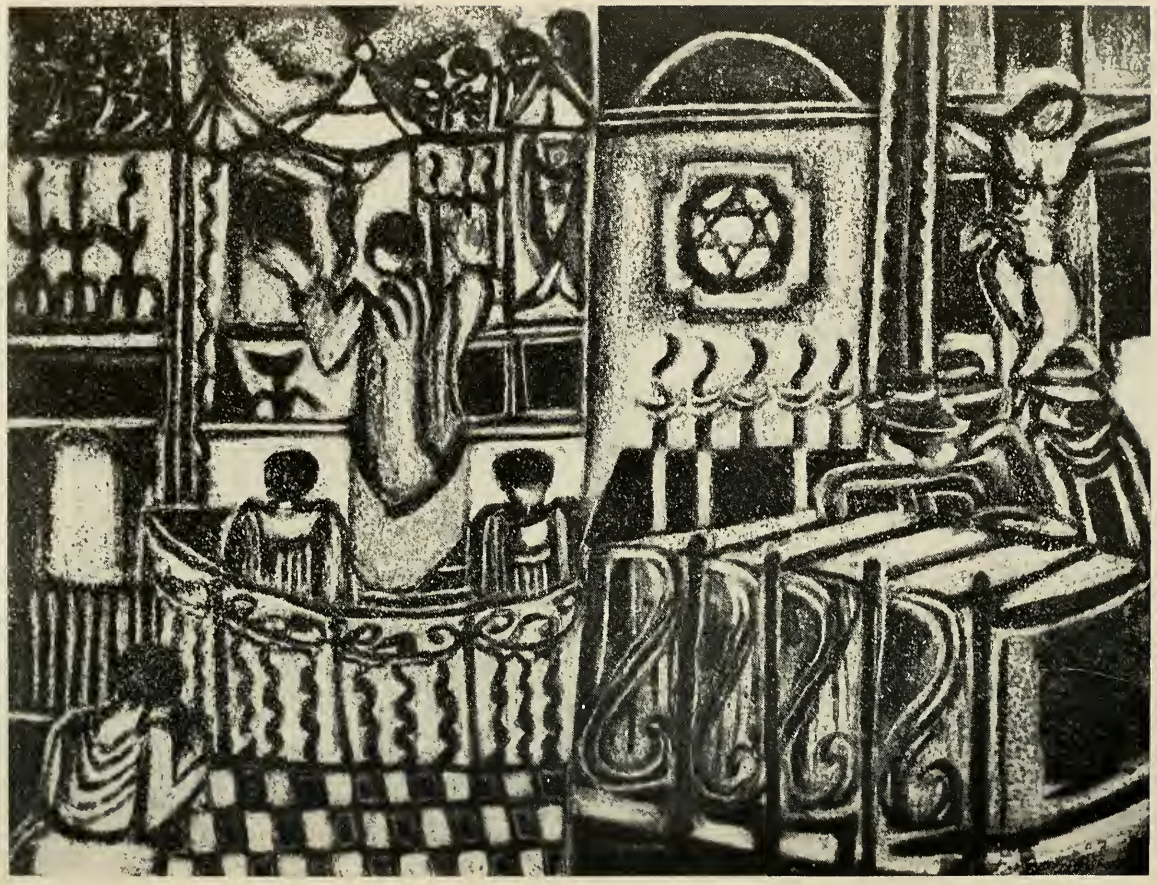
● **Sister Mary Honora, O.S.F.**

The yule log ashed, and the needles dropping on the rug
remind one the pinchbecks have outlived noel's
newness. Gewgaws lack luster. I push a plug
pensively to vacuum these volatiles.
Unlike the artless shepherd boys, who shared with Mary
and the Child, a lamb, I find fanfaronade
of studied crest, often signatures the fee
of clinquant gifts. Many Bethlehems have grayed
snow on a Christmas fir, since herdsmen starred a simple
lamb by a crib; now within days our dear toys
go unremembered. The Hoover hums its fill
ingesting bauble chips, bayberries, and noise.
The room is cleanly candid, irrelevancies shelved;
and I indebted to You give a fullness unselved.

VIRGIL CANTINI is Associate Professor of Art at the Henry Clay Frick Fine Arts Department of the University of Pittsburgh. He works with enamel, bronze, copper, and brass.



A NEW STAR IS BORN by Virgil Cantini. Enamel. Privately Owned.



REQUIEM by Cecile Holzinger. Etching. Artist's Collection.

Windows in My Hands

● **Richard Kelly**

Father, there are windows in my hands!
Come, see the falling snow,
the halls of broken twilight there!
Hear the cold December bells
are ringing like a morning Mass
and men in darkness go
with heads bent white and stiff.

Father, break these windows
from the night and share with me
the falling of your quiet age,
the muted bells that Christmas
wakes this morning from your sleep;
and make the darkened Magi rise
to be your gift for living men
who walked their length in shadows
bringing light behind them in your eyes
and raising steeples where my hands go blind.

Gentian on a Sea Cliff

● **Howard A. Wiley**

This gentian blossomed in this sand-soiled rift
an ancient glacier's ice-gnarled fingers carved
into this cliffwall. When this hard wind shifts
and blows the sand to sea the roots will starve;
or spray or scud or squall will one way close
the sand-quick hour of this fringed blue thing
that sickled Fortune, grinning cynic, chose
to flower where the cormorants' claws cling.
Such fragile beauty's fated to fleet life
where granite and gray sea sprawl roiled in strife,
for anxious-quick the sea and wind will be,
with shrilling tongue, spume lash, brined hand,
to rout the fleck of blue audacity
that stains this roisterous, foaming, black, brute strand.

←

CECLIE HOLZINGER is a graphic artist who also works in oils. Her "Requiem" was drawn from life at a funeral Mass in New York City. The scene reminded her of a funeral she attended during the days of terror in Munich. She is now a citizen of the United States and has exhibited her works here and in Europe, as well as in Japan and the Philippines. She is represented in the Library of Congress, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and in many private collections.

Brother

● **Joseph W. Beatty**

I SLOWLY lumped up the stairway, counting the cracked and worn wooden steps, littleboy-like, laying what I had in the farthermost region of mind, glad for the consolation of numbers, undemanding, unburdensome numbers, which, when they are said right, remain said, and if they are said wrong, are righted. At the top of the stairs I stopped, wondering if I had heard some small sound that would recall me from where I was and what I was about, but there was only the kind of floating stir that usually moves within the walls of rooms in large homes and gives them a sort of dignity that would otherwise be lost in the snickering face of unuse.

Jim is my brother. It was his door that my feet and strength would find within seconds, for no matter how we linger and put it off, there is always that certain inevitable moment when we must come to doing.

I remember that I was glad when Mother first told me he was coming — I was in the parlor peering about a table on fours in five-year-old play — and was happy with her later when she grew bigger and walked slower and surer, brimming with life. Then she left me alone with Father, to bring him forth, and for the first time I regretted him, perhaps hated him, because somehow even then I realized she was giving something, suffering, sacrificing something for him, as she had for me when I was too young for knowing. But then she was back with us again with him, and they had a word for him that they told me about before she went away and he became "Brother."

Looking down the corridor now to his closed door, outlined along the bottom edge by soft light from his room, was like looking back into the long tube of past and suddenly remembering how it looked and felt before — now that you're out of it and not intent on the round circle that it ends in (that ungaugeable spot where it will spill you out into now), but when you're able to look at it, purposing it, and know its roundness and sound. I never noticed it before, the hall. It gave me a feeling of momentary refuge, sanctuary — a narrow bare temple of my own — as if while I stood where I was, I would be lost in its own silence, safe, and if I should walk out of it or further into it, I would be myself again, with my fears and dangers regained.

I measured my way to his room. The closed door taunted me, perhaps because there is something so very final about a closed door, and I was not ready for this one. I had not begun beginnings yet. I was half-hoping that beginnings would open and the way to ends be bared and tangible so that everything would be as simple and right and finally over as youth. Hanging outside the door, I suddenly realized how poor words were and how we must beg for words we feel are right for telling some things, and how we

finally come to know that they are as empty and futile as our begging action — how words never seem to say what we want them to say, and how we always find it out after we've said them and then can't reach into past moments to clutch them back to us. I wore my forehead into the door — some terrible membrane that refused to be permeable to me or what I had to say to him. The whole moment was silent and at the same time pregnant with a thousand meanings I dared not try to understand. The precise time when I realized he was on the other side of the door — as aware as I was where I was — was not clear because it was something I sensed as one might sense presences that do not give themselves away but are found out. His shadow stuck beneath the door-edge. The situation recoiled against me — we both knew where we were and what we were there for. Our faces were level, facleaving the same impression on his sight as the smell of fresh paint on nostrils — that always fascinated me, which focused itself on my mind at this moment. It seemed to betray some kind of need he had which was too natural for him to be ashamed of. There on the outside of the door, I thought of how it was not strange that it was this way. Things were never sudden for us.

I remember the time Queenie broke her leg, falling into the ditch — that was last year, the day after Jim's tenth birthday. He was alone at home. Mom and Dad were visiting. He took her to the vet — "had her mended," as he said afterwards — and I didn't know she had been hurt 'til I saw the neat white splint on her mis-shapen leg, and then he told me how it happened. Most times, though, we didn't need words, Jim and I. Mom used to say, "I swear, I don't think you two ever talk 'cept when you're beggin' me for cookies."

Now was the time for telling. If he would only peek open the door and show me an eye, it would be over. What I was here to say was not meant to be trifled through a closed door. My hand palmed the knob and turned slowly. I felt him shift his body in wild silence, and the knob sprung back in place, staring. Our brotherhood betrayed us. We knew our sighs, and pretending was as hollow and empty as this corridor, as thin as this door between us. He knew what was, in the same way that I knew what he was pretending was not. The meeting each other except for this wooden kind of shield that protected him, and me also, in a way. I could almost feel his breathing and see his face against the door, with that unfinished, raw look which seemed right for that far land of eleven he was passing through. There was something traceable (perhaps one might say "delicate," but it's not "delicate" exactly) in his face — ing, with the door between, was some child's game we finally realized we had grown out of. I left him. I never said the words, but he knew them; yes, he knew them, long before we crowded the door with our terrible silence and knowing. He knew I came to meet his eyes and say what he tried to believe was not. I descended the stairs with no time or thoughts for counting. The words fell away — "Ma's dead, Jim."

Non Ebur Neque Aureum

Horace, *Odes*, II: xviii

● **Translated by Brother Francis Adrian, F.S.C.**

No paneled ceiling overlaid with gold
gleams softly in my house, nor is it rich
with ivory; no beams of dappled stone
from Grecian hills are borne on pillars mined
in farthest Africa. And not by guile
am I the stranger heir of princely hall.
No high-born matrons weave and work for me
costume empurpled with Laconic dyes.

But loyalty is mine, and skillful art
most bountiful. And although I am poor,
rich men have sought me out. I sue the gods
for nothing more; I press a gracious friend
for no more kindness. Satisfied I rest,
full happy with my cherished Sabine farm.

A new day follows hard upon the last;
a new moon hastens all too soon to wane;
and all the while you bargain once again
for marble chisled from its lodge, the edge
of yawning grave forgotten. Minding not
the shadows of the tomb, you rear a grand
and splendid palace or a country house
that pushes out the sea: you are not rich
enough, confined by the shore. Indeed
you tear down boundary stones and, greedy, leap
beyond the measured limits of your grange,
driving forth the tenant and his wife;
their ragged urchins and ancestral gods
held fast against their bosoms as they flee.

Yet pause, remember this. No palace is
more sure of tenancy to any lord
or prodigal and mighty master than
the destined bourne of greedy Death. O man,
for what beyond shall you insatiably
reach out? The Earth impartially unlocks
her bosom and enfolds the pauper and
the sons of kings. And neither did the gold
of sly Prometheus persuade the bark
of Charon to re-cross the Acheron.
Proud Tantalus and all his children are
held fast by princely Death, who needs no call
to free the poor man, weary from his work.

Conrad's Waste Land: Moral Anarchy in "The Secret Agent"

● Frederick R. Karl

I.

SEVERAL critics have accepted both *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* as Conrad's twin political novels in which his conservatism partially vitiated the dramatic force of his narrative. So Irving Howe, in pursuing the role of the anarchists in these novels, has attacked Conrad's aesthetic and political failure to describe what "really happens in the world of anarchism."[1] Howe remarks, in this connection, that if the anarchists are to have any weight dramatically, they must be of sufficient significance to engage us seriously, and he claims that the anarchists of *The Secret Agent,* as well as those of *Under Western Eyes,* fail to do so. By becoming solely objects of ridicule, he contends, they fail to provide the tension for Verloc's moral emptiness *(The Secret Agent)* or Razumov's confession of guilt *(Under Western Eyes).* If the anarchists are contemptible, the argument runs, then Conrad's political prejudices have invalidated his dramatic denouement and precluded any serious heroic gesture. Howe's position, when relegated to the political question alone, can hardly be disputed, but seen in the entire perspective of *The Secret Agent* it breaks down upon examination. To emphasize the anarchists by making them a stronger force in the novel would have been tantamount to making anarchy in its political sense the theme of the novel. To do this would be to detract from the main theme of the novel, the pervading sense of moral corruption that touches everyone as it extends back and forth from city to inhabitants, infecting the anarchists, the police, the Verlocs, even the pitiful draft horse itself which draws the "Cab of Death" across London. This is the theme toward which all other elements must persistently turn, as Conrad implied in the Author's Note.

When Howe claims, on the other hand, that political anarchy in *The Princess Casamassima* is presented in its strength, he forgets or fails to recognize the difference in theme between the James novel and *The Secret Agent.* James deliberately presented the anarchists in their power, for Hyacinth's problem is to choose a course of action that will mean dedication either to anarchistic activity or to an equally attractive life of art and contemplation. Under these conditions, the presentation of anarchy in a favorable, or at least strong, light was an artistic necessity. Under Conrad's conditions in *The Secret Agent,* a similar presentation would surely have been disastrous. Even if we grant that Conrad's politics were conservative and orderly, perhaps quite aristocratic, and that he extended this bias to his

presentation of anarchy and anarchists, even if this is conceded, the anarchists of *The Secret Agent* are still aesthetically valid when they are seen against that larger theme of moral corruption which had engaged Conrad since *Almayer's Folly*, his first novel.

If, consequently, one recognizes that the anarchists are only *part* of the general immorality and intellectual waste land of the pre-World War One scene, then one can see them in a more reasonable perspective. No doubt, Conrad could have depicted the anarchists differently had that been intended — obviously, as he himself admitted, they are politically ridiculous — but a more realistic presentation of anarchy, rather than adding to the aesthetic truth of the novel, might have shifted the entire theme to something that was never intended, to something more topical but less significant.[2]

II.

Conrad's comments in the Author's Note to *The Secret Agent* suggest strongly that moral anarchy is the subject and ironic humor the method of the novel. After pointing out that a friend (Ford Madox Ford) had given him the idea of anarchists and the idiot boy Stevie, and after revealing his familiarity with the Greenwich Observatory outrage of 1894, Conrad tells how all these seeming disparate items coalesced when he came upon a little-known volume of recollections by an assistant commissioner of police:

> And then ensued in my mind what a student of chemistry would best understand from the analogy of the addition of the tiniest little drop of the right kind, percipitating the process of crystallization in a test tube containing some colourless material.[3]

Of course, the tale that would be *The Secret Agent* was as yet imperfectly apprehended. Then came the idea of the city, Conrad's first big city background:

> Then the vision of an enormous town presented itself, of a monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heaven's frowns and smiles; a cruel devourer of the world's light. There was room enough there to place any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of lives. (p. xii)

Against this city background Winnie Verloc's story — and Conrad emphasizes that her tragically ironic plight is the center of the novel — stands out in bold relief. Her story is one, he says, of "utter desolation, madness and despair," and it is conveyed by and through the presence of the city. The horror of Kurtz ("Heart of Darkness"), the fears of Jim *(Lord Jim)*, the interior loneliness of Decoud *(Nostromo)*, and the negation of Donkin and Wait *(The Nigger of the "Narcissus")* all come together in the inhumanity of grimy London. Just as "Heart of Darkness," *Nostromo*, and *Victory* are central among Conrad's non-European works, so *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* are keys to his European views; taken together, they convey the Conradian world of brutality, loneliness, fear, and misunderstanding. The troubled skies of Costaguana *(Nostromo)* are now the cloudy skies of London; the symbol of malevolent silver has become the symbol of macabre city streets described as dismal, raw, and gloomy, full of slimy mud, gas jets turned low, overworked city horses, maimed drivers,

fatigued and hungry people, and dreary shadows. The people are desolate city dwellers: Winnie feels no love for her husband; her brother, Stevie, is a hopeless idiot; Verloc himself is a mysterious figure who can know only insecurity; Winnie's mother is impotent, "staggering on swollen legs." But as Conrad earnestly believed, only ironic treatment would enable him to say all he felt in scorn as well as in pity. His use of irony, the basis of his tragic-comic view of moral corruption in *The Secret Agent* is, as in every good novel, not solely of the word, but also an irony of scenic conception.

Conrad's London is, in several respects, a direct outgrowth of Dickens's, with perhaps overtones of the Paris of Baudelaire. In Dickens, one thinks of *Our Mutual Friend*, in which the scrubby side of London is the very stuff of the story, and the waste-bearing Thames flows through the lives of the chief characters; or a novel like *Little Dorrit*, in which the Marshalsea becomes the equivalent of prison-London in *The Secret Agent*. Even Conrad's eccentrics are not far removed from the character creations of Dickens — the Professor, for instance, is obviously the caricature of an idea. Of Dickensian humor is the scene between the Assistant Commissioner and Sir Ethelred, the "Great Presence," whose interest is in Fisheries rather than in the affairs of people. In matters of London city background, irony of word and scene, and attitude toward character, Conrad in this novel approached the work of that greatest of all English city novelists, whose primary concern, also, was with man's moral duties and responsibilities.

The city and their ironic position in it are the two sides of the ungracious existence of Adolf and Winnie Verloc. Every aspect of Verloc's life partakes of the desolation of a modern city. He is — because always a comically inadequate figure — an organic part of its grubbiness, and through him the city lives. A seller of shady wares, he is of fatty build and unprepossessing in appearance; married by Winnie not for love but for security, he is an ineffectual Prufrock, who in anarchistic circles possesses not even a name but a designated mark, Δ. Nameless, loveless, and unable to function effectually as counter agent, Verloc is as impotent as the unpropitious city which unfolds his activities. We first meet him issuing from the back of his store with "eyes naturally heavy" and "an air of having wallowed, fully dressed, all day on an unmade bed." From here we shortly see him pass along the street, with its rattling milk carts and its vast assortment of matter indifferent to man's fate, a bloodless man walking mechanically to the Embassy where Vladimir berates his lack of activity and makes fun of his pretentions to anarchy. An isolated counter agent who can turn to no one, Verloc is a lost figure in a heartless city which rejects even its most gifted sons.

Verloc's dispirited walk to the Embassy, however, merely foreshadows another journey that is, later, to assume a central psychological importance in the narrative; for Verloc's fatuous existence in a London coldly indifferent to him is paralleled midway through the novel by the gloomy cab ride of Winnie, Stevie, and their mother to the charity home, a ride which, in context, is primarily a grotesque symbol of ironic desolation. In its ramifications the cab ride is as much a symbol of desperate faith as the silver in *Nostromo*. The ride conveys the hopelessness of spirit in a modern city, and creates a sense of what Paul Wiley has called "impending chaos";

but the chaos is not that of anarchy or anarchists. Furthermore, *The Secret Agent* possesses only superficial resemblance to a police story. Its chronology defeats the main elements of the detective novel, for the very arrangement of the book destroys suspense. One can reason that if the police are aware of who planted the bomb almost as soon as the reader himself, then the chase or the activity of anarchists is evidently not of primary importance. The theme is surely, as in *Nostromo* and "Heart of Darkness," a presentation of moral corruption as it spreads back and forth from city to character. Conrad's aim is the castigation of modern life, particularly the middle-class worship of science and materialism and the drab world it has built for itself. Accordingly, *The Secret Agent* presents an ironic view of spiritual despair haunting a world which looks only toward its own materialism. But while Conrad disclaimed any social or philosophical intentions in the novel — he said it "is *purely a work of imagination*" [italics his] — he did admit its moral significance.

Although these implications are, of course, only partially suggested by a cab ride that takes fewer than twenty pages in a novel of more than three hundred, Conrad has carefully realized the scene. The old cab as it rattles and jolts and jingles along the London streets is barely able to maintain the precarious position of its riders, and for each it assumes the anguish of a torture chamber. The cab, says Conrad, "was so profoundly lamentable, with such a perfection of grotesque misery and weirdness of macabre detail, as if it were the Cab of Death itself," (p. 170) that even the horse pulling it appears as a figure of doom. For Stevie, who is pathologically helpless, the horse becomes an immediate object of sympathy; as the butt of man's inhumanity and indifference, the animal is the poignant equivalent of all the idiot Stevies in the world:

> Stevie was staring at the horse, whose hind quarters appeared unduly elevated by the effect of emaciation. The little stiff tail seemed to have been fitted in for a heartless joke; and at the other end the thin, flat neck, like a plank covered with old horse-hide, drooped to the ground under the weight of an enormous bony head. The ears hung at different angles, negligently; and the macabre figure of that mute dweller on the earth steamed straight up from the ribs and backbone in the muggy stillness of the air. (pp. 165-66)

Driven by a maimed driver and a maimed horse, the ancient and wobbly coach rattles its way across ". . . the early dirty night, the sinister, noisy, hopeless, and rowdy night of South London. . . ." Within are the idiot boy, his yellow and bilious mother, and his devoted sister who had married solely for her family's security. The coach, the animal, the driver, and the riders are all in a state of disequilibrium as they pass Brett Street across St. Stephen's and through the back-alleys of London to the charity home. When Stevie implores the driver not to whip the horse, the humanity of the idiot is ironically pitted against the gross realities of city life; for the driver answers: " 'Ard on 'osses, but dam' sight 'arder on poor chaps like me." Stevie, however, can say nothing, "for the tenderness to all pain and misery, the desire to make the horse happy and the cabman happy, had reached the point of a bizarre longing to take them to bed with him." (p. 167)

If the theme of *The Secret Agent* is moral corruption or the lack of moral sanity, then this scene is a symbolic embodiment of all the major threads of the novel. Its irony is implicit in its central figure, Stevie, who ineffectually tries to substitute love for man's inhumanity. The necessity for survival, as expressed in the cabman's words — " 'I've got my missus and four kids at 'ome. . . . This ain't an easy world.' " — becomes the cry of a grimy city which perpetuates crime in the name of self-survival. Stevie's plan for humanity, as the innumerable circles he draws, is lost amidst the rejoinders of cruel and expedient adults.

Stevie's penchant for —

> . . . innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric, a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable." (p. 45)

— symbolizes an inner perfection made manifest by his drawings. The circle, as a geometric form of perfection, clashes ironically with Stevie's outward imperfection. More than his few words, the circles express sympathy and compassion for all the downtrodden, and also, as Thomas Mann has pointed out, display an artistic sensibility. His beauty of soul, like Myshkin's in *The Idiot* of Dostoevsky, places him at an immediate disadvantage amidst a materialistic world of realities. That his idiocy contains deep sensitivity is summarily dismissed early in the novel when Ossipon, an anarchist, remarks that Stevie's circles represent a typical form of degeneracy. To back his statement, Ossipon points, with pseudo-scientific pretentiousness, to Lombroso's study of degeneracy, and by so doing demonstrates the inability of scientific materialism to deal with human emotions. This is, Conrad suggests, the theme of the novel.

III.

Conrad held that this was a novel about Winnie Verloc,[4] and she seems, so far, to have played little or no role. But Winnie's story is presented carefully in the novel; for through Verloc's own meaningless existence and through the insensibility of the anarchists, the scene is aptly prepared for Winnie with her day-to-day existence, devoid as it is of any illusions or ideals. Winnie's end is a fitting close to the desolation and despair that have marked her life with the counter agent Verloc and the anarchists. Her view that things "do not stand much looking into" is an indication of her moral superficiality, a lack of substance that is as much manifest in her gas-lit surroundings as in her relations with her husband. By the time we meet Winnie in her own right, we recognize that she too will act from a surface morality, that she too will never ask the right questions at the right time.

Coming as she does so late in the story — not until page 190 does Winnie come to the fore — her sudden strong position may seem to impair the novel structurally. In Conrad's later stage version of *The Secret Agent*, for example, her role is greatly strengthened by her initial appearances. She is quickly presented as a strong personality who through her physical

attraction for Verloc can confidently make him acquiesce in her demands. But returning to the novel proper, we see that by means of Winnie's marked identification with Stevie and through a personal spiritual bankruptcy that is the result of dismal surroundings, her ultimate despair and death become an integral part of the novel — the story is surely her decline and fall.

Conrad's emphasis on the doubling of Winnie and Stevie is not fortuitous. From the very beginning of her marriage to Verloc, she had been her brother's defender; and when Verloc's activity inadvertently leads to Stevie's death, she avenges his death by killing her husband. In that scene of grotesque irony — while Verloc expects forgiveness Winnie contemplates murder — it is really the idiot Stevie, now resurrected, who in Winnie's form kills Verloc; it is the fallen artist who rejects his oppressors and strikes for freedom. Conrad describes the scene:

> He [Verloc] waited. Mrs. Verloc was coming. As if the homeless soul of Stevie had flown for shelter straight to the breast of his sister, guardian, and protector, the resemblance of her face with that of her brother grew at every step, even to the droop of the lower lips, even to the slight divergence of the eyes. (p. 262)

Shortly after, Ossipon remarks the likenesses: "'It's almost incredible the resemblance there was between you two . . . . yes, he resembled you.'" By making Winnie a physical double of Stevie, Conrad related her more firmly to the preceding sections of the novel and technically made allowance for what otherwise might have seemed an arbitrary shift. Literally veiled from Verloc by her intentions — she sat, says Conrad, "like a masked and mysterious visitor of impenetrable intentions" — Winnie gains revenge for Stevie on the sordid world of which both were an integral part. The role, then, that Winnie plays can be adequately explained only by seeing her as a human being surrounded by moral anarchy and spiritual decay.

The sense of moral despair that is conveyed through Verloc and Winnie, through Stevie and his surroundings, and through London city is found at its fullest single expression in the activities of anarchists like Ossipon, the Professor, Karl Yundt, and Michaelis, whose implicit belief in the over-all efficacy of science can evoke only ironic comment from the author. As part of the desolation pervading a modern city, the anarchists "fit" perfectly; that is, their lack of humanity is a significant complement to those other elements of inhumanity in London. Their indifference to human values and their complacency in the face of others' suffering indicate their gross role. But as anarchists operating in the political world, they are, as Howe pointed out, little more than absurd pretenders. Their ideas and methods of working can only make them objects of ridicule, never forces to be taken seriously.[5] In this respect, Conrad's attitude is such that, while the anarchists take themselves seriously and pursue their ends, the reader sees their true insensitivity and ineffectuality: — and this distinction is surely the core of the novel's irony.

In letters and in the Author's Note, Conrad pointed out the important and widespread use of irony in *The Secret Agent* and showed his awareness that his approach had been successful: "It is one of the minor satisfactions of my writing life that having taken that resolve I did manage, it seems to

me, to carry it through to the end." The ironic method gave Conrad one of his prime requisites — that sense of distance from his material which in him was tantamount to mental security. But irony can be double-edged: it can destroy the characters while also giving the author an authentic weapon of attack. Conrad, however, managed to maintain the shaky balance between constructive irony and destructive ridicule; for the ironic tone here is another way of suggesting the theme.

Conrad's attitude toward the police in their relation to criminal elements in society is part of the irony implicit in the novel; the police, no less than the anarchists, are morally corrupt. Each needs the other to exist, for anarchy without an opposition from order is as unthinkable as order existing with elements of anarchy. The Professor — whose ideal is the perfect detonator — is, ironically, a slave to human order and justice. He himself, in a revealing comment to Ossipon, unknowingly defines his own position while castigating his fellow revolutionary: " 'You revolutionists . . . . are the slaves of the social convention, which is afraid of you; slaves of it as much as the very police that stands up in the defense of that convention. Clearly you are, since you want to revolutionize it. . . . The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket.' " (p. 69) It is only because of Inspector Heat's organized world that the Professor can have an existence; in a world lacking in order, the Professor would obviously have nobody and nothing to threaten. Heat, for his part, recognizes that the common type of criminal is "of the same kind as the mind and the instincts of a police officer," but the psychopathic Professor creates problems beyond his understanding. For the Professor intends to upset the very conditions which maintain both criminals and police. At the end of the novel, it is, ironically, the Professor who remains, "frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable," who in his madness wants to regenerate the world through destruction.

In his attachment to anarchy as a form of aggression that masks a personal neurosis, the Professor is an outgrowth of the grumbling Donkin *(The Nigger of the "Narcissus")* and the perverted Sotillo and Pedro Montero *(Nostromo)*, and is in many ways a forerunner of the villainous Jones *(Victory)*. By advocating a society wherein the weak would be exterminated, the Professor is expressing a psychopathic personality that has since been transmuted into the grotesque realities of modern political life. He says:

> "First the great multitude of the weak must go, then the only relatively strong. You see? First the blind, then the deaf and the dumb, then the halt and the lame — and so on. Every taint, every vice, every prejudice, every convention must meet its doom." (p. 303)

After all the weak and the sick have been exterminated, what remains, he is asked, and he answers, "I remain — if I am strong enough." The Professor is a poltical prophet.

Not only is Conrad's irony directed toward law and disorder, but also toward every relationship and situation in the novel. The motivating idea — the proposed bombing of Greenwich Observatory — is plotted in ironic terms: that the bourgeoisie could be infuriated only by an attack on science, which in its eyes is untouchable. The Embassy agent Vladimir comments:

> "A bomb in the National Gallery would make some noise. But it

> would not be serious enough. Art has never been their fetish. . . . What do you think of having a go at astronomy? . . . Such an outrage combines the greatest possible regard for humanity with the most alarming display of ferocious imbecility. . . . And there are other advantages. The whole civilized world has heard of Greenwich. The very boot-blacks in the basement of Charing Cross Station know something of it. See?" (p. 32 ff.)

That entire scene in the Embassy between the testy Vladimir and the muttering Verloc partakes of Conrad's most devestating irony. Without becoming ridiculous, Verloc, in fact, is a natural object of comic irony in every scene in which he appears, and even after his grotesque death he becomes an ironically conceived source of confusion to Winnie and Ossipon. In that latter scene, Winnie is telling of her murder of Verloc while trying to gain affirmation of her deed from Ossipon, who himself thinks that Verloc died long before in the attempted bombing of the Observatory; and when she goes on hysterically about her dead brother, though without naming him, Ossipon inevitably thinks she means Verloc.

He is of course dead to both, but in their wholesale misunderstanding of motives and remarks and in their distance from each other as human beings, the sublime stupidity of their lives is epitomized in these few words.

This type of misunderstanding, which occurs frequently in Conrad's work, becomes almost a symbolic way of suggesting an underlying idea. The ironic situation — based as it is on a misunderstanding of which the reader but not the character is aware — comes to support the major theme of the novel. In *The Secret Agent*, the inability of Winnie and Ossipon to communicate with each other is the inability of science to come to terms with human emotions, the inability of one person to enter into another's tragedy, and, finally, the inability of human beings to be honest even in their relation to each other's feelings. Conrad is forcefully suggesting that a failure in understanding is a concomitant of a failure in morality, and that to communicate with each other, human beings must have not only minds and feelings but also a sense of ethical conduct that can rise above immediate needs. This belief, and not the criticism of political anarchy, is the fundamental stuff of Conrad's first city novel.

FOOTNOTES

[1] "Joseph Conrad: The Political Novels," *Kenyon Review*, XV, XVI (Autumn, 1953, Winter, 1954), 505-521, 1-19.

[2] Conrad wrote to Galsworthy: "I had no idea to consider Anarchism politically, or to treat it seriously in its philosophical aspect: as a manifestation of human nature in its discontent and imbecility." G. Jean-Aubry, *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, II (New York, 1927), 37.

[3] Kent Edition (New York, 1925), p. xi. All subsequent references will be to this Edition.

[4] In the Author's Note, Conrad wrote: "Personally, I have never had any doubt of the reality of Mrs. Verloc's story, but it had to be disengaged from its obscurity in that immense town, it had to be made credible, I don't mean so much as to her soul but as to her surroundings, not so much as to her psychology as to her humanity." (p. xiii)

[5] Writing to his friend Cunninghame Graham, Conrad revealed candidly his aims: "All these people are not revolutionaries — they are shams. . . . By Jove! If I had the necessary talent I would like to go for the true anarchist, which is the millionaire. Then you would see the venom flow. But it's too big a job." Jean-Aubry, II, 60.

Contributors

four quarters salutes the four La Salle College men whose works appear in the pages of this January issue. BROTHER DANIEL BERNIAN, F.S.C., President of the College and Associate Professor of French, submitted his manuscript in French. RICHARD P. BOUDREAU, Assistant Professor of French, made the translation. BROTHER FRANCIS ADRIAN, F.S.C., is translating the complete works of Horace. JOSEPH W. BEATTY, a freshman, makes his first appearance in **four quarters.** He also writes poetry. RILEY HUGHES published *Frontier Bishop* last September. His freshman reader, *Today and Tradition,* is coming from the presses of Harper and Brothers this week. FREDERICK R. KARL has published articles and fiction in several literary quarterlies and is co-author of *A Reader's Guide to Great Twentieth-Century English Novels.* SISTER MARY HONORA, O.S.F., has published poems in *Spirit, Voices, Approach, Inscape,* and other periodicals. FATHER RAYMOND ROSELIEP is preparing a first book of poems for early publication. He has poems appearing currently in *Mutiny, Scribe, Drama Critique, Beloit Poetry Journal,* and *Delta Epsilon Sigma Bulletin.* SAMUEL HAZO's first book of poetry, *Discovery and Other Poems,* published by Sheed and Ward last autumn, includes "The Sky Fisher." Recently he completed two series of programs for the National Association of Educational Broadcasters under the title "Poets at Mid-Century." LAURA LIVINGSTON, a New York Suburbanite, is at work on a novel and also on a play. RICHARD KELLY is editor of *The Half Moon.* He has an article on the poetry of Thomas Merton in the forthcoming *Renascence.* HOWARD WILEY has a novel in progress and plans to write a verse play.

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